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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine and compare the managerial communication strategies of 40 Brazilian and American female managers. Subjects read four scripts describing various problems that a manager might encounter with an employee or another manager of equal status, and explained how they would resolve the problem. Four versions of each script (four scripts are in Portuguese as well as English) were used, matching all posible combinations of American and Brazilian managers with male and female employees. Responses were read and assigned to one of three classifications: (1) communication, if the primary means for resolution was discussion; (2) organizational power, if the employee would be forced to follow the manager's directives; or (3) mixed approach, if the response included discussion of the problem coupled with either an implicit or an explicit threat of sanction should the employee refuse to comply with the manager's directives. The results gave no evidence that the managers of either nationality would behave differently toward men than toward women. The data also indicated no difference between nationalities in the way they would resolve disputes with employees dissatisfied at having to perform a task not in their job description, in the way they handle employees who had violated the chain of command, or in handling disputes with other managers. The results did indicate that Brazilians were more likely than Americans to resolve challenges to their authority through the use of power. (HTH)

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A COMPARISON OF MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES BETWEEN BRAZILIAN AND AMERICAN WOMEN

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by

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This study is one of a series conducted by the authors increasing knowledge about managerial communication strategies. Paper presented May 26, 1985, during the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Honolulu.

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A COMPARISON OF MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES BETWEEN BRAZILIAN AND AMERICAN WOMEN

Recently, research has been done attempting to understand differences in communication strategies between men and women managers. Thus far, the evidence seems to indicate that there are consistent differences, with women managers tending to be more open, responsive, and communicative than men managers (Baird & Bradley, 1979; Todd-Mancillas and Rossi, 1985). However, it should be considered that these findings have been restricted to research conducted on American women, and that no similar research has yet been reported contrasting communication strategies of American women with women from other cultures. Such research would be interesting in that it would make clearer the implications of culture in determining one's managerial styles. Among those cultures most interesting to contrast with American culture would be any of those taken from the Third World.

The first author is a native of Brazil, with many business contacts in Porto Alegre. Accordingly, the first author was able to collect a considerable amount of data about Brazilian women managers' communication behavior. Further, in a previous study the authors had already collected and systematically analyzed a large body of data contrasting American managerial men's and women's communication when attempting to resolve disputes with subordinates (Todd-Mancillas and Rossi, 1985). For the purpose of this study, a similar data collection effort was undertaken in Porto Alegre, with 40 women managers interviewed to identify their preferred communication strategies when attempting to resolve disputes with employees. This data was then compared with the previously collected data on American women managers. This comparison proved useful for answering the basic research question of this study: In what ways (if any) do Brazilian and American

women managers differ from one another in their communication strategies when resolving disputes with subordinates?

Procedures

Interviewees

All 80 managers (40 American women, 40 Brazilian women) participating in this study worked in middle and top-management positions. The 40 American women were from Lincoln, Nebraska, a medium-sized, midwestern city. The 40 Brazilian women lived and worked in Porto Alegre, an economically progressive coastal city.

Data Collection Procedure

Each manager was asked to read a packet of four scripts describing various problems that a manager might have with an employee or another manager of equal status as themself. Each of these scripts described critical incidents validated by previous research as difficulties frequently encountered by managers when managing subordinate personnel (Rossi and Wolesensky, 1983). While these scripts were initially constructed on the basis of numerous interviews conducted with American managers (Wolesensky, 1981), they are also representative of problems frequently encountered by Brazilian managers when managing Brazilian subordinates.

Script A describes an instance in which an employee expresses reluctance to do an assigned task not included in his/her job description (see Appendix A). Script B describes an instance in which an employee violates (apparently inadvertently) the established chain of command (see Appendix B). Script C involves a dispute in which an employee challenges the manager's competence to give correct instructions on how to do an assigned task (see Appendix C). Script D is different from the others in that it involves a dispute between a newly hired high-level employee and other high-level employees (managers), who challenge the former's authority to introduce a change in termination policy (see Appendix D). Script D contains sufficient ambiguity

to make less than clear whether the newly hired high-level employee has the authority to impose changes in personnel policy on the managers.

Four versions of each script were utilized, matching all possible combinations of American and Brazilian managers with male and female employees. After reading the scripts, interviewees were asked to explain how they would resolve the problems. Of course, American names were given to the managers depicted in the scripts ready by American managers, while a Portuguese translation of the scripts and Brazilian names were given to the managers depicted in the scripts read by Brazilian managers.

Coding Procedures

Using a previously established and validated coding procedure (Rossi & Todd-Mancillas, 1985), the responses were read and assigned to one of three classifications. Responses were assigned a Communication classification if they indicated that the primary means of resolving the dispute was through discussion with the employee, which at least to some extent considered objectively the employee's perspective and used not coercion or threat, but rather nonmanipulative persuasion in obtaining compliance (see Appendix E).

Responses were assigned an Organizational Power classification if they indicated that the employee would be forced to follow the manager's directives (or sanctioned for presumably not having followed them in the first place). Usually, responses received organizational power classifications for one of two reasons: the respondent made an explicit comment to the effect that the employee would be reprimanded or threatened with dismissal; the respondent did not imply in any way that she would consider objectively the employee's reasons for objecting to or possibly having inadvertently violated the managerial directive in question (see Appendix F).

Lastly, responses were assigned a Mixed Approach classification if

they included both an indication to discuss objectively the problem with the employee, coupled with either an implicit or explicit threat of sanction should the employee refuse to comply with the manager's directives (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis Procedures

After the responses were coded into communication, organizational power, and mixed approach categories, 2 X 3 contingency tables were constructed, preliminary to the analysis of the data using X^2 tests (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4). A series of X^2 tests were then conducted to determine what managerial styles predominated in each of the scenarios. First, 2 X 3 X^2 tests were conducted separately for American and Brazilian managers to determine whether they responded differently to male employees than to female employees. If both tests were found nonsignificant and, therefore, it appeared that American and Brazilian managers responded similarly to male and female employees, the data for male and female employees were combined and a X^2 test was then conducted to determine whether American managers differed from Brazilian managers in their response styles (see Tables 5, 6, 7, 8). If it appeared that American and Brazilian managers did not differ in their response profiles, then the data for American and Brazilian managers were combined and a one-way (1 X 3) X^2 test was conducted to determine whether one response type was preferred over the others (see Tables 9, 10, 11, 12). In general, significant X^2 tests were followed up with simpler X^2 tests to tease out the conceptually meaningful relationships among managerial nationality, response style, and gender of employee.

All X^2 tests were considered significant if the obtained X^2 exceeded 5.99, the critical X^2 needed at the .05 level of significance, with df = 2 (Siegel, 1956).

Results

All Scripts: Tests for Significant Nationality of Manager By Gender of Employee Interactions

In none of the scenarios was there obtained evidence of either American or Brazilian managers intending to behave differently toward men than women employees (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4). Thus, to facilitate reporting of other results, no further reference will be made to the results of these analyses.

Script A: Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order To Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description

Analysis of the data indicated that American and Brazilian managers did not differ significantly in the ways in which they would attempt to resolve disputes with employees disgruntled because they were being asked to do something not in their job descriptions (see Tables 1 and 5). Further, when combining data across nationality of manager, neither did they appear to predominate a particular response style (see Table 9). American and Brazilian managers were nearly equally divided in their preferences for using communication, power, or some combination thereof in attempting to resolve the disputes with employees.

Script B: Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command

Analysis of the data indicated that American and Brazilian managers did not differ significantly in the ways in which they would attempt to resolve disputes with employees who had apparently violated chains of command (see Tables 2 and 6). Further, when combining data across nationality of manager (Table 10), it is apparent that both American and Brazilian managers are more likely to use power to resolve this type of problem ($X^2 = 25.92$).

Script C: Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task

Analysis of the data indicated that American and Brazilian managers differed significantly in the ways in which they would attempt to resolve disputes with employees explicitly challenging their authority (see Tables 3 and 7). Brazilian managers were significantly more likely than American managers to resolve this type of dispute through the use of power ($X^2 = 18.11$). In further contrast with American managers, Brazilian managers were also significantly less inclined to communicate with their employees about the problem.

Script D: High-Level Employee's Authority is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees (Managers)

Analysis of the data failed to indicate significant differences between American and Brazilian managers in their reported preferences for handling disputes with other managers (see Tables 4 and 8). Further, when combining data across nationalities, neither was there indicated one response mode predominate over others (see Table 12). However, it should be noted that while not statistically significant ($X^2 = 5.52$, with critical $X^2 = 5.99$), that there was a tendency for both American and Brazilian managers to prefer communication as a means of resolving disputes with other managers.

Discussion

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is that Brazilian women managers are decidedly more inclined than American women managers to sanction, threaten, or terminate employees explicitly challenging their authority (Script C). This greater inclination to use force may reflect that aspect of Brazilian (and other Latin) cultures, whereby managers treat their employees in more paternalistic fashion than is characteristic of North American society.

Too, this difference may also reflect differences in role modeling. In recent years North America has been surfeited with debate and controversy about appropriate managerial strategies for women, while South America appears, at least presently, much less involved in this debate, a debate that cannot help but publicize alternatives to power usage when resolving disputes with employees. In the absence of public debate about preferred managerial styles for women, Brazilian women managers are probably inclined to adopt the only previously existing managerial model, the machismo model exhibited by many Brazilian men managers (Taylor, 1984). The machismo model is characterized by a stern, authoritarian responses to insubordination. It may be because of their having adopted the machismo model that the Brazilian managers responded so much more harshly than their American counterparts when explicitly threatened by subordinates.

It is also interesting to note that when resolving disputes with employees who had violated the chain of command (Script B), thereby causing some embarrassment to the manager, that both American and Brazilian managers were inclined to use power to resolve the problem. Possibly, both American and Brazilian women feel too vulnerable in their positions to allow subordinates to inadvertently threaten their authority by operating outside the established chains of command. Further, although not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that there was a slight tendency for Brazilian managers to use more power than American managers (see Table 6), a finding in keeping with the previously considered explanation that Brazilian women may be more inclined to use power as a result of learning to model macho managerial styles.

In two of the scenarios (Scripts A and D), both American and Brazilian managers appeared to exhibit no significant preference for using communication versus power in their handling of disputes. When resolving disputes with

employees who had reluctantly complied with their directives (Script A), both Americans and Brazilians were nearly as likely to resolve the disputes through communication as through the use of threat or coercion. Apparently, then, when employees comply with directives, even if begrudgingly, there is no immediate proclivity toward the use of force, even by women managers who have had ample opportunity to witness more harsh discipline than is characteristic of North American society.

When resolving disputes with other managers, both American and Brazilian managers appear nearly equally as inclined to use power, communication, or a combined approach in resolving disputes. Although not statistically significant (obtained $X^2 = 5.52$; critical $X^2 = 5.99$), it would appear that both American and Brazilian managers are somewhat more inclined to communicate with rival managers rather than resort to use of force (see Table 12).

In summary, it seems that there are more similarities than differences in the ways in which American and Brazilian managers resolve disputes with subordinates and peers. Both prefer to use power when resolving disputes with subordinates (by definition less powerful than themselves) who have embarrassed them by violating the organized chain of command, and Brazilians appear especially prone to use power when dealing with subordinates who have explicitly challenged their authority. Conversely, both Americans and Brazilians are at least equally as likely to use communication as power when resolving disputes with other managers (by definition, approximately equally as powerful as themselves) or with subordinates who comply, albeit reluctantly, with the manager's directives.

Future research in this area may be directed toward contrasting Brazilian men's responses to situations similar to those used in this study.

A similar contrast with American men managers would make possible an interesting nationality-by-gender of manager contrast not often considered in the literature.

Appendix A
(Script A)

Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order
To Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description

(Marge/Maria) is the supervisor of several employees in the stock room at an organization. Just recently, the position of inventory control clerk was eliminated. Marge's employees are now responsible for controlling and monitoring the amount of inventory on hand. Marge says, "When an order came in, I assigned the task of doing the inventory work to one of the clerks. She appeared angry, but did do the inventory control work. I found out later, via the grapevine, that the clerk felt she should not have had to do the inventorying. She felt that it was my responsibility to do it with her. The communication problem in this situation was persuading her, after the fact, that it was now her responsibility to inventory the stock she unpacked. I was met with lots of resistence, because it was her expectation that this was my responsibility and vice versa."

Maria supervisiona diversos funcionarios no setor de estoque de uma companhia. Recentemente, a posicao do empregado que fazia o balanco de mercadorias foi eliminada na companhia. Agora os empregados de Maria sao responsaveis pelo controle e balanco do estoque. Maria diz que "quando recebemos um carregamento, eu solicitei a uma das funcionarias para fazer o balanco das mercadorias. Ela ficou braba, mas terminou por fazer. Descobri mais tarde, atraves de boato no escritorio, que a funcionaria disse que nao deveria ser obrigada a fazer o balanco, pois acreditava que isto era minha responsabilidade. O problema nesta situacao foi o de persuadi-la, depois do fato ter ocorrido, de que de agora em diante ela seria responsavel pelo balanco das mercadorias. Encontrei muita resistencia de sua parte, pois ela achava que era minha obrigacao fazer o balanco e vice-versa."

Appendix B

(Script B)

Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority
and Violates Chain of Command

Jean (Nara) is the supervisor of a senior clerk and several entry-level clerks in an organization, but she and the senior clerk have experienced difficulties in defining the boundaries of authority in the department. "For example," Jean says, "She had been given responsibility for calculating the statistics of a report that is published by another department. When he encountered an error in some of this data, rather than coming to me with it, he went to the other department manager. This angered the other manager, since he felt that my subordinate should have checked with me before coming to him. I also felt that this was the case, so it was very difficult for me to support my subordinate when the angered department manager contacted me to complain about my senior clerk's "uppity" behavior. If he (the senior clerk) had just come to me first, we could have gone together to the department manager, and none of the anger would have occurred, and lots of time would have been saved in clarifying the error."

Nara supervisiona um datilografo e varios outros funcionarios em uma companhia. Entretanto, ela e o datilografo tiveram alguma dificuldade em estabelecer o parametro de autoridade do datilografo no departamento. "Por exemplo", disse Nara, "o datilografo era responsavel pelo calculo de um relatorio estatistico que era publicado por um outro departamento. Quando encontrou um erro nos dados fornecidos pelo outro departamento, em vez de me comunicar sobre isto, foi direto ao supervisor do outro departamento. O supervisor ficou irritado, pois achava que meu funcionario deveria ter me consultado antes. Eu tambem achei que o funcionario nao agiu corretamente e por isso foi dificil para mim dar-lhe apoio quando o outro supervisor veio reclamar. Se meu datilografo tivesse me consultado, nos teriamos ido juntos falar com o supervisor e assim nada disto teria ocorrido e nos teriamos poupado tempo e energia, esclarecendo a atitude do datilografo."

Appendix C

(Script C)

Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task

Kathy (Lisa) was hired by a local company not only to manage the office, but also to check the accuracy of the work being done by the employees. In this capacity, she not only instructs people in the office about how certain procedures are to be carried out, but also is responsible for giving them feedback when they make mistakes. One of the female employees in the office repeatedly made the same mistake in completing a form. When Kathy went to her, for the third time, to explain how the form was to be completed, she "told me that she didn't think I was right. She suggested that I call the head office and make sure that my instructions were correct. I walked away knowing that I was right, but I called the office anyway. As I suspected, I was right. Only after she had seen me call the head office and get their confirmation did she accept the fact that she was doing something wrong and that my suggestions were right. My feedback alone was not enough, though."

Lisa foi admitida em uma companhia local nao apenas para chefiar o escritorio, como tambem para checar a precisao do trabalho executado pelos empregados. Neste sentido, tinha que instruir os functionarios daquele setor sobre a maneier como certos procedimentos deveriam ser executados e fazer comentarios quando encontrasse erros. Um funcionario no escritorio, continuamente, cometia o mesmo erro ao completar um formulario. Quando Lisa o abordou pela terceira vez para explicar como o formulario deveria ser preenchido, o empregado disse que "ele achava que eu estava e-rada e sugeriu que eu chamasse o escritorio central para confirmar minha informacao. Afastei-me do funcionario, sabendo que estava correta, mas chamei o escritorio de qualquer maneira para satisfaze-lo. Como achava, eu estava correta. Apenas depois de presenciar meu telefonema e que o funcionario admitiu estar errado. Portanto, minha instrucac por si so nao foi suficiente para convence-lo a preencher o formulario como eu estava dizendo."

Appendix D

(Script D)

High-Level Employee's Authority Is Challenged
by Other High-Level Employees (Managers)

Jane (Jane) was hired by her employer to develop personnel policies and procedures. The organization had tripled in size since its creation, and the need for someone in this capacity was apparent to her employer. As Jane familiarized herself with the organization, she realized the need for reports which specified a supervisor's reason(s) for terminating an employee. All of the supervisors in the organization were men. They reacted to Jane's procedure by telling her that the forms were unnecessary, and since they hadn't done this type of reporting before, why did they need to now. Jane said, "I had to persuade them of the importance of this type of documentation. Two of the supervisors even went to my boss and asked about the necessity of such reports. It was fortunate that my boss endorsed me. However, a great deal of time was wasted in persuading the supervisors. I felt as if I had to defend not only the credibility of the reporting, but also my credibility."

Jane foi admitida por seu patrao para desenvolver procedimentos e normas involvendo problemas de demissao no departamento de pessoal. A companhia em que trabalhava havia triplicado em tamanho desde sua criacao e a necessidade de re-organizacao nesta area era aparente ao empregador. Enquanto Jane se familiarizava com os procedimentos e normas em vigor na companhia, ela se deu conta da necessidade de relatorios especificando a razao ou razoes para demissao de funcionarios. Os gerentes da companhia reagiram as modificacoes sugeridas por Jane dizendo que os formularios que ela queria implementar nao eram necessarios e, como eles nunca precisaram preencher tais formularios antes, nao vinham qualquer razao para faze-lo agora. Jane disse, "eu tive que persuadir aqueles gerentes da necessidade deste tipo de documentacao. Dois dos gerentes inclusive foram perguntar ao meu patrao sobre a necessidade de tais formularios. Felizmente, meu patrao me deu apoio. Entretanto, muito tempo foi disperdicado persuadindo os gerentes. Neste caso, tive que defender nao apenas a credibilidade dos formularios, como tambem minha propria credibilidade."

Appendix E

Examples of Communication As

the Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

Since the position wasn't replaced and someone had to do it, I'd call my group together and try to improve our efficiency. I'd brainstorm with my group, so we'd all be thinking about solutions and it would be easier to have a consensus for the decision to be adopted.

Appendix F

Examples of Use of Power as the Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

The first rule of being a manager is never letting subordinates see your faults or question your own skills. If they don't think you're sure of yourself, they will never be sure of you. In this case, I most certainly would not have called. I'd have laid down the law hard. Even if I have questioned the policy myself, I would not have checked in front of him. I'd have dropped hints that, if he didn't want to do it the way I was requesting, we would find someone else who would.

Appendix G

Examples of Combined Use of Power
and Communication as Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

I don't like people who do end runs, running around the situation instead of dealing directly with it in a direct manner. I'd try to explain to my people the importance of the chain of command and let them know what happens when lines of communication are violated. I'd try to make my clerk feel that he learned a lesson and I'd try to prevent the other manager from getting angry next time.

Table 1

Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Brazilian Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	6	6	8
Female Employees	7	9	4

$X^2 = 2.02$

American Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	6	3	11
Female Employees	6	5	9

$X^2 = .70$

Table 2

Script B

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Brazilian Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	1	14	5
Female Employees	3	11	5

$X^2 = 1.48$

American Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	1	9	8
Female Employees	2	9	7

$X^2 = .40$

Table 3

Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Brazilian Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	2	13	5
Female Employees	0	15	5

$X^2 = 1.14$

American Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	3	5	12
Female Employees	6	4	9

$X^2 = .56$

Table 4

Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority
Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Brazilian Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	8	7	5
Female Managers	11	7	2

$X^2 = .96$

American Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Managers	7	4	9
Female Managers	10	7	3

$X^2 = 4.34$

Table 5

Brazilian Managers Contrasted with American Managers--Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Managers's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Brazilian Managers	13	15	12
American Managers	12	8	20

$X^2 = 4.16$

Table 6

Brazilian Managers Contrasted with American Managers--Script B

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Brazilian Managers	4	25	10
American Managers	3	18	15

$X^2 = 1.52$*

*Because two cells had expected frequencies less than 5, the communication and mixed cells were combined; thereby meeting appropriate criteria for the computation of X values, while at the same time allowing one to determine whether one or the other culture had a significant preference for using power.

Table 7

Brazilian Managers Contrasted with American Managers--Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give
Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Brazilian Managers	2	28	10
American Managers	9	9	21

$X^2 = 18.11$

Table 8

Brazilian Managers Contrasted with American Managers--Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority
Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Brazilian Managers	19	14	7
American Managers	17	11	12

$X^2 = 1.4$

Table 9

Data From Brazilian and American Managers Combined--Script A

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order
to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
	25	23	32

$X^2 = 2.01$

Table 10

Data From Brazilian and American Managers Combined--Script B

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
	7	43	25

$X^2 = 25.92$

Table 11

Data From Brazilian and American Managers Combined--Script C

(Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
11	37	31

Table 12

Data From Brazilian and American Managers Combined--Script D

(High-Level Employee's Authority
Is Challenged by Other High-Level Employees: Managers)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
	36	25	19

$X^2 = 5.52$

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